

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 402  
By Haynes

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Sandra "Sande" Knight  
Graham of Madison.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were saddened to learn of the death  
of a distinguished and beloved Tennessean, Mrs. Sandra "Sande" Knight Graham of Madison;  
and

WHEREAS, Sandra Graham will live eternally in the hearts and minds of many, as she  
was an avid educator, dedicated wife, loving mother, fine Christian and exemplary community  
servant; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Graham began her meritorious life in Madison, Tennessee, the  
daughter of Mildred and Claude Knight; she was a graduate of Goodlettsville High School and  
Middle Tennessee State University, where she was active in numerous collegiate activities,  
including cheerleading and R.O.T.C.; and

WHEREAS, fondly remembered by her family and friends as "Sande", this lovely lady  
will forever be remembered for her compassion and dedication to those around her; whether in  
her school, her church, her home or with friends, Sande gave unreservedly of her time and  
talents solely for the betterment of others; and

WHEREAS, Sande Graham was truly a voice of integrity in education; she served the  
students of Knox-Doss Middle School with enthusiasm, industry and singular acumen as an  
English teacher for many years; and

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WHEREAS, Sande's concern for her students never ended with the school day or the school year; when students needed a warm coat, new shoes, or just a kind word, Sande was always there; and

WHEREAS, to this very day, Mrs. Graham's former students recall the remarkable impact she had on their lives; Sande Graham kept one troubled student in particular from dropping out of school; she spent many extra hours working with the youth, who is now a medical student at the University of Tennessee, until he regained his confidence and desire to continue his education; and

WHEREAS, the grateful student recalled upon Sande's death that the educator had told him to have faith that patience and God would take care of his problems; the young man noted that patience and God certainly helped, but credits Mrs. Graham with a big part of his success, too; and

WHEREAS, throughout her life, Sande placed others' concerns well ahead of her own; she was "always the first there and the last to leave"; and

WHEREAS, modesty was yet another strength of Sande's; she never liked to talk of her many achievements, but would brag of others' achievements instead; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Graham gave unselfishly of herself to her church, the City Road Chapel United Methodist Church in Madison; she evinced her faith as a devout member, prayer group leader, youth group leader and Sunday school teacher; and

WHEREAS, a close friend and pastor of the City Road Methodist church, Reverend Thomas Gildemeister, recently reflected fondly upon Sande's full life; he began by saying, "Sande Graham cut a wide path through life, always quietly and with great discretion, but a wide path indeed. And of all the places and people blessed by Sande's friendship, none were more touched by her understanding leadership than her beloved church."; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Gildemeister continued his heartfelt tribute by saying:

"People listened to Sande Graham at City Road. We all knew she thoroughly considered her words before the first word would leave her mouth.

Her thoughts so obviously would emanate deep within her soul, reflecting the intimacy that she enjoyed with God. And her message always was 'transportable' – we could carry her wisdom with us as we parted company.

Her loving guidance of children mirrored the sensitivity that she so gracefully employed as a teacher. We know that her teaching mirrored the faith she had in the Source of all genuine love and life.”; and

WHEREAS, Sandy was perhaps most proud of the love and companionship she shared with her family; Sandra and Larry Graham married on May 8, 1977, and since that fateful day this loving couple shared the joys and sorrows of life's journey, facing the world as one; and

WHEREAS, her devoted husband said “Sande was not only my wife, but she was my best friend”; Mr. Graham noted that he had never known a person not to love Sande and quoted his own father as saying, “Any one that could not love Sande could not love God.”; and

WHEREAS, Sande Graham was the proud step-mother of her husband's two children, Larry Graham II and Autumn Childress; the Graham's were also blessed with their own daughter, Kristen Bria Graham, born in September of 1978; and

WHEREAS, Sande devoted much of her life to the proper rearing of her baby girl; she said a mother, if she can afford it, should be home with her child, and she remained home to raise her daughter until she began kindergarten; and

WHEREAS, revealing the devout educator within her, Sande's biggest dream was to see her daughter Bria, now a Middle Tennessee State University student, graduate from high school in 1997; because of her illness, Sande was only able to see the video tape of her daughter's Davidson Academy graduation but was filled with pride and joy just the same; and

WHEREAS, throughout her illness, Sande displayed enormous personal strength; her physician said she was perhaps the “bravest person” that he had even seen and noted that she always placed her faith in God, often saying “I am in God's hands and he will take care of me”; and

WHEREAS, as her illness progressed, Sande wrote a personal note later found by her husband that serves as a reminder of her strong character and unflagging belief; she wrote: “God give Bria, Larry and me the patience, knowledge and courage to see this through – remind

us all that through you, God, all things are possible. I pray for the children I teach, for I now realize more of what some of them are going through. Help me to empathize more and be much more patient and understanding”; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that we, in Reverend Gildemeister’s words, pause in our deliberations to “celebrate a life well lived.”; for those who had the privilege of being with her in the last weeks of her life, her pastor said, “we can also stand in awe of a death well-died. In those final days and hours, no one could have any doubts in Sande’s absolute conviction that death is not the end of life, but merely a part of life. My life and every life she touched was made more rich and full.”; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby pause to celebrate the meritorious life of Mrs. Sandra “Sande” Knight Graham. We remember her many successes and selfless contributions as an esteemed educator, dedicated wife and mother, devout Christian, and remarkable community leader.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our heartfelt condolences to Mrs. Graham’s family; the congregation of City Road United Methodist Church; the staff and students of Knox-Doss Middle School; and her many true friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final resolving clause omitted from such copy.